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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN, CU, OVIP (YOUNG, ANDREW), XM

SUBJECT:SECRETARY'S PRESS CONFERENCE (7/29/77) --
PANAMA, CUBA AND YOUNG TRIP

FOLLOWING EXCHANGES TOOK PLACE AT SECRETARY'S PRESS
CONFERENCE, 7/29/77

Q: WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR A NEW TREATY ON THE PANAMA
CANAL? YOU JUST ATTENDED A MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE
AND I'D LIKE TO KNOW.

SECRETARY VANCE: YES. I ATTENDED A MEETING THIS MORNING
WITH THE PRESIDENT AND OTHERS AND WITH TWO OF THE NEGO-
TIATORS FROM PANAMA, AS WELL AS THE PANAMANIAN AMBASSADOR.
AT THAT MEETING THE PRESIDENT INDICATED HIS PLEASURE AT
THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN MADE TO DATE ON THE NEGOTIATION
OF A CANAL TREATY.

THERE REMAIN SOME ISSUES BETWEEN US. THERE IS A
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DIFFICULT ISSUE OF AN ECONOMIC NATURE, WHICH IS PROBABLY
THE MOST COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT OF THOSE THAT REMAIN.

THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THESE ISSUES COULD
BE RESOLVED PROMPTLY AND THAT WE COULD LOOK FORWARD TO A

COMPLETION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE

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PANAMANIANS RESPONDED THAT THEY SHARED THOSE HOPES AND TOOK BACK WITH THEM A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT TORRIJOS.

Q: MR. SECRETARY, TO PURSUE THAT PARTICULAR POINT?

SECRETARY VANCE: YES.

Q: IN A PRACTICAL WAY, THERE COMES A TIME IN THE FALL OR WINTER WHEN IT'S NO LONGER FEASIBLE TO TRY TO GET A PANAMA CANAL TREATY THROUGH THE CONGRESS WITH AN ELECTION YEAR COMING UP. DO YOU HAVE ANY NOTION OF WHAT THAT DEAD-LINE MIGHT BE? IN OTHER WORDS, HOW SOON MUST YOU HAVE A TREATY IN ORDER FOR ITS PROSPECTS TO BE REASONABLE IN THE PENDING POLITICAL SEASON?

SECRETARY VANCE: I DON'T THINK THAT WE CAN SET AT THIS POINT A DATE WHICH WOULD BE THE DATE ON WHICH WE THINK IT WOULD NO LONGER BE FEASIBLE TO TRY AND PUSH FORWARD IN A GIVEN YEAR A CANAL TREATY. I THINK IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHEN A CANAL TREATY CAN BE AGREED TO, AND THEN WE'LL HAVE TO ADOPT OUR LEGISLATIVE STRATEGY WHEN WE SEE THAT FACT OCCUR. . . .

Q: ON ANOTHER TOPIC, WHAT'S THE STATUS OF U.S.-CUBAN TALKS AT THIS POINT?
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SECRETARY VANCE: ON THE STATUS OF U.S.-CUBAN TALKS -- OR U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS, LET ME BROADEN IT -- OUR SO-CALLED INTERESTS SECTION, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE EMBASSY OF ANOTHER COUNTRY IN HAVANA AND THEY LIKEWISE DOING THE SAME THING IN THE UNITED STATES, WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE 1ST OF SEPTEMBER. I AM GLAD THAT THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN BECAUSE I THINK THAT WILL FACILI-TATE THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE CUBANS, AND PARTICULARLY WITH SUCH THINGS AS THE SEIZURES OF VESSELS, WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE RECENTLY. THERE HAVE BEEN SEIZURES OF ABOUT FIVE SHIPS -- SIX SHIPS, I BELIEVE IT IS -- ONE OF WHICH IS STILL BEING HELD BY THE CUBANS.

IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS THROUGH THIRD COUNTRIES THAN DEALING DIRECTLY WITH THEM. WE HAVE PROTESTED THESE SEIZURES, AND I WILL FEEL MUCH HAPPIER ABOUT THE SITUATION WHEN WE HAVE OUR OWN PEOPLE THERE WHO CAN TALK FACE TO FACE ON THESE KINDS OF ISSUES.

ON OTHER ISSUES, WE HAVE NOT HAD ANY FURTHER DIS-

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CUSSIONS SINCE THE LAST TIME THAT I HAD A PRESS CONFERENCE.

. . .

Q: MR. SECRETARY?

SECRETARY VANCE: YES, MR. TALBOTT.

Q: AMBASSADOR YOUNG IS GOING TO BE LEAVING, WHEN YOU'RE STILL AWAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, FOR A TRIP TO THE CARIBBEAN AND SOME CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES; AND HE'S BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE DEPARTMENT, OF COURSE, IN PREPARING THAT. I WONDER IF YOU'D TELL US FROM YOUR VANTAGE POINT WHAT THE PURPOSE OF THAT MISSION IS.
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SECRETARY VANCE: YES. ANDY IS GOING TO THE CARIBBEAN TO DO TWO OR THREE THINGS.

ONE, HE IS GOING TO DISCUSS WITH THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES THERE AND SOME OF THE COUNTRIES ON THE MAINLAND OF SOUTH AMERICA ISSUES WHICH WILL BE COMING UP BEFORE TE HE UNITED NATIONS IN WHAT IS GOING TO BE, I BELIEVE, A VERY IMPORTANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN THE FALL.

IN ADDITION TO THAT, HE IS GOING TO BE DISCUSSING A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT AND DIFFICULT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH IX EXIST IN THE CARIBBEAN. THESE ARE PROBLEMS WHICH WE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON FOR A NUMBER OF MONTHS BUT WHICH REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL MORE WORK. THERE ARE DEEP-ROOTED PROBLEMS OF A VERY COMPLICATED NATURE, AND I HOPE THAT HIS CONVERSATIONS WILL BE ABLE TO ADD TO AND SUPPLEMENT THE WORK WHICH IS ALREADY UNDER WAY IN THAT AREA.

THIRDLY, I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE WHICH WE ATTACH TO OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE CARIBBEAN. ANDY KNOWS A NUMBER OF THE LEADERS IN THOSE COUNTRIES; AND I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT HE GO THERE, MEET WITH THEM, AND DEOMNSTRATE THE INTEREST AND CONCERN THAT WE HAVE WITH THEM AND WITH THEIR INDIVIDUAL VIEWS AS WELL AS SOME OF THE REGIONAL PROBLEMS WHICH EXIST... CHRISTOPHER

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